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Responding to Campus Violence

Jane Falls, PhD

Virginia Tech

NCSCBHEP
April 7, 2008



Internal Review – August 22, 2007

- Virginia Tech President Charles Steger requested an internal review to examine the interface between the university's student counseling services, academic affairs, judicial affairs and the legal system.



Findings

- Virginia Tech has
 - a responsive, student-centered system that is designed to identify and assist students in need in a variety of ways and to hold all students accountable for their behavior within the university community.
 - In addition, a network of structures is in place to identify and respond to students who are more acutely distressed.



Recommendations

- Expanding Capacity in the System
- Improving Communication in the System
- Connecting Strategies for Identifying and Supporting at-Risk Students to the Broader University Plan for Campus safety



Expanding Capacity in the System

- Refining the Care Team
- Creating a Threat Assessment Team
- Expanding Case Management Capacity



Improving Communication in the System

- establishing a central university contact
- conducting on-going training for personnel on the application of the Family Educational Privacy Act (FERPA), and
- implementing a new policy for emergency notification information for students.



Connecting Strategies for Identifying and Supporting at-Risk Students to the Broader University Plan for Campus safety

- An important feature of any comprehensive approach and plan for campus safety is that the pieces or key elements form an integrated whole.



- Expanding Training of Administrators, Faculty, and Staff in Violence Prevention
- Extending the University-wide Violence Prevention Policy
- Building Community to Promote Individual and Community Well-Being



Conclusion

- Many of the recommendations made in this report are
 - systemic in nature, and
 - only a piece of the larger picture of campus safety, and must be linked directly to other efforts underway to enhance campus safety.
 - Any system needs to be dynamic in nature to adjust to the changes that continually emerge from the needs of the university community and new lessons learned from on-going evaluation of the system and best practices of our peers.



Town Hall Meeting – March 19, 2008

“Of the major initiatives, all have been thoroughly reviewed and most have seen substantial progress towards completion.”

– President Steger



Recommendations under consideration

- but for which an implementation decision has not been made, include:
 - monitoring some areas of campus with closed-circuit security cameras,
 - adding a card key access control system to some academic and administrative buildings, and
 - installing electronic displays in classrooms so that alerts could be broadcasted there.



17 initiatives were prioritized

- Many of those initiatives have already been substantially implemented. Highlights of what has been done include:
 - VT Alerts has been launched,
 - All interior locks for general assignment classrooms have been replaced to allow rooms to be locked from inside.



Initiatives (cont'd)

- Access to mail rooms has been separated from access to the residence hall in which the mail room is located.
- A threat assessment team chaired by Police Chief Wendell Flinchum has been formed.
- An interim director of emergency preparedness planning was named.
- Eleven additional full-time positions have been allocated to the police department.



Initiatives (cont'd)

- Case management capacity has been expanded to ensure services are available to students in need.
 - Three new case managers and three new counselors have been hired.
 - Policies and procedures have been reviewed, revised and developed to ensure appropriate mental health treatment.
 - The Care Team, the central structure for identifying and responding to students at risk has been refined and its leadership expanded.



References

- Complete news report found at:
<http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/story.php?relyear=2008&itemno=183>
- More information to be found at:
<http://www.president.vt.edu/>
- Photos taken from (unless noted):
<http://www.april16archive.org/browse/?objectType=3/>